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THE MONARCH MINSTREL.—A SONNET BY LORD BYRON.

The Harp the MONARCH MINSTREL swept,
The king of men—the lord of Heaven,—
Which *Musick* hallowed while she wept
O'er tones her heart of hearts had given—
Redoubled be her tears—its chords are riven!

It softened men of iron mould,
It gave them virtues not their own ;
No ear so dull—no soul so cold
That felt not—fired not to the tone,
Till DAVID'S lyre grew mightier than his Throne!

It told the triumphs of our King—
It wafted glory to our God—
It made our gladdened vallies ring—
The cedars bow—the mountains nod—
Its sounds aspired to Heaven, and there abode.

Since then, though heard on earth no more—
Devotion and her daughter, Love,
Still bid the bursting spirit soar,
To sounds that seem as from above,
In dreams that day's broad light cannot remove.

FROM THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR OCTOBER.

Extracts from a Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon, on the east side of the Euphrates ; by Claudius James Rich, Esq. resident for the Honourable East India Company at the Court of the Pacha of Bagdad.

I WAS completely deceived in my anticipation about Babylon: instead of a few insulated mounds, I found the whole face of the country covered with vestiges of building, in some places consisting of brick walls surprisingly fresh, in others merely of a vast succession of mounds of rubbish of such indeterminate figures, variety, and extent, as to involve the person who would have formed any theory in

inextricable confusion. The whole country between Bagdad and Hellah is perfectly flat, and (with the exception of a few spots as you approach the latter place) an uncultivated waste. That it was at some former period in a far different state, is evident from the number of canals by which it is traversed, now dry and neglected; and the quantity of heaps of earth, covered with fragments of brick and broken tiles, which are seen in every direction—the indisputable traces of former population.

At present the only inhabitants of this tract, are the Zo-beide Arabs, the Sheikh of which tribe is responsible for the security of the road, which is so much frequented that robberies are comparatively seldom heard of. At convenient distances, khans or caravanserais are erected for the accommodation of travellers, and to each of them is attached a small village of Fellahs.

The ruins of Babylon may be said to commence from Mohawil, the whole country between it and Hellah exhibiting at intervals, traces of buildings, in which are discoverable burnt and unburnt bricks and bitumen; three mounds, in particular, attract attention from their magnitude. The ground to the right and left of the road bears the appearance of being partially and occasionally a morass, though, at the time we passed it, it was perfectly dry; the road which is due south, lies within a quarter of a mile of the celebrated mass, called by Pietro Della Valle, the Tower of Belus; Hellah is nine miles from Mohawil, and nearly forty eight from Bagdad.

Hellah is called by Abulfeda, Hellah Bere Moreid. The district called by the natives El-Aredh Babel, extends on both sides of the Euphrates. Its latitude, according to Niebuhr, is $32^{\circ}. 28'$, and it is situated on the western bank of the Euphrates, a few shops and huts only being on the eastern. It is meanly built, and its population does not exceed between 6 and 7000, consisting of Arabs and Jews, (who have one synagogue, there being no Christians, and only such Turks as are employed in the government.) Among the gardens to the west of the Husseinia gate, is the Mesjid-esshems, a mosque built on the spot where popular tradition says, a miracle was wrought, similar to that of the prophet Joshua. This country abounds in pretended tombs of prophets. On the Tigris, between Bagdad and Bassora, they show the sepulchre of Ezra; twelve miles in

the desert, to the south west of Hellah, is that of Ezekiel, and to the southward, the tomb of Job : the two former are places of pilgrimage of the Jews, who do not acknowledge those of Job and Joshua.

The inhabitants of Hellah bear a very bad character. The air is salubrious, and the soil extremely fertile, producing great quantities of rice, dates, and grain of different kinds, though it is not cultivated to above half the degree of which it is susceptible. The grand cause of this fertility, is the Euphrates, the banks of which are lower, and the stream more equal than the Tigris. Strabo says, that it was a stadium in breadth at Babylon ; according to Rennel, about 491 English feet, or, D'Anville's still more reduced scale, 330. Niebuhr says, at Hellah it is 400 Danish feet broad ; my measurement by a graduated line at the bridge there, brings it to 75 fathoms, or 450 feet. Its breadth, however, varies in its passage through the ruins. The Euphrates rises at an earlier period than the Tigris ; in the middle of the winter it increases a little, but falls again soon after ; in March it again rises, and in the latter end of April is at its full, continuing so to the latter end of June. When at its height it overflows the surrounding country, fills the canals dug for its reception, without the slightest exertion of labour, and facilitates agriculture in a surprising degree. The ruins of Babylon are then inundated, so as to render many parts of them inaccessible, by converting the vallies among them into morasses. But the most remarkable inundation of the Euphrates is at Felugiah, twelve leagues to the westward of Bagdad, where on breaking down the dike which confines its waters within their proper channel, they flow over the country, and extend nearly to the banks of the Tigris, with a depth sufficient to render them navigable for rafts and flat-bottomed boats.

The water of the Euphrates is esteemed more salubrious than that of the Tigris. Its general course through the site of Babylon, is north and south. I questioned the fishermen who ply on the river, respecting its bottom, and they all agreed that bricks and other fragments of building are very commonly found in it.

On the ruins of Babylon there is not a single tree growing, excepting one old one ; but in the intervals of the ruins, where, in all probability, no building ever stood, there

are some patches of cultivation. I made the most diligent search all through the gardens, but found not the slightest vestige of ruins, though previously I heard of many, an example of the value of information resting solely on the authority of the natives. The reason is obvious. Ruins composed like those of Babylon, of heaps of rubbish, impregnated with nitre, cannot be cultivated, and any inferior mound would, of course, be levelled in making the garden.

The ruins of the eastern quarter of Babylon commence about two miles above Heilah, and consist of two large masses or mounds, connected with and lying south and north of each other, and several smaller ones which cross the plain at different intervals. The northern termination of this plain is Pietro Della Valle's ruin, from the southeast angle of which (where it evidently once joined, being only obliterated there by two canals,) proceeds a narrow ridge or mound of earth, wearing the appearance of having been a boundary wall. This ridge forms a kind of circular inclosure, and joins the southern point of the most southerly of the two grand masses.

The river bank is skirted by a ruin, which I shall for perspicuity's sake call its embankment, though, as will hereafter be seen, there is good reason for supposing it was never intended for one. It commences on a line with the lower extremity of the southern grand mound, and is there nearly three hundred yards broad at its base, from the east angle of which a mound proceeds, taking a sweep to the south-east, so as to be nearly parallel with, and forty yards more to the south than the boundary : this loses itself in the plain, and is in fact the most southerly of all the ruins. The embankment is continued in a right line to the north, and diminishes in breadth, but increases in elevation, till at the distance of seven hundred and fifty yards from its commencement, where it is forty feet perpendicular height, and is interrupted by a break nearly of the same breadth with the river : at this point a triangular piece of ground commences, recently gained from the river, which deserts its original channel above, and returns to it again here : this gained ground is a hundred and ten yards in length, and two hundred and fifty in breadth at its angle or point, and along its base are traces of a continuation of the embankment, which is there a narrow line, that soon loses

itself. Above this the bank of the river affords nothing worthy of remark; for though in some places there are slight vestiges of building, they were evidently not connected with the abovementioned embankment.

The whole of the area inclosed by the boundary on the east and south, and river on the west, is two miles and six hundred yards in breadth from east to west (exclusive of the gained ground, which I do not take into account, as comprising no part of the ruins,) as much from Pietro Della Valle's ruin to the southern part of the boundary, or two miles and one thousand yards to the most southerly mound of all, which has been already mentioned as branching off from the embankment. This space is again longitudinally subdivided into nearly half, by a straight line of nearly the same kind as the boundary, but much its inferior in point of size. This may have crossed the whole enclosure from south to north, but at present only a mile of it remains. Exactly parallel with it, and a little more than a hundred yards to the west of it, is another line precisely of a similar description, but still smaller and shorter; its northern termination is a high heap of rubbish of a curious red colour, nearly three hundred yards long and one hundred broad, terminating on the top in a ridge: it has been dug into various parts, but few or no fine whole bricks have been found in it. All the ruins of Babylon are contained within the western division of the area, that is, between the innermost of these lines and the river, there being vestiges of building in the eastern or largest division between the outermost line and the external boundary. Before entering into a minute description of the ruins, to avoid repetition, it is necessary to state that they consist of mounds of earth, formed by the decomposition of building, channelled and furrowed by the weather, and the surface of them strewed with pieces of brick, bitumen and pottery.

On taking a view of the ruins from south to north, the first object that attracts attention is the low mound connected with the embankment; on it are two little parallel walls close together, and only a few feet in height and breadth, which bear indisputable marks of having formed part of a Mahometan oratory, or koubbé. This ruin is called *jum-juma* (Calvary) and gives its name to a village a little to the left of it. To this succeeds the first grand mass of ruins, which is one thousand one hundred yards in length, and

eight hundred in greatest breadth, its figure nearly resembling that of a quadrant: its height is irregular, but the most elevated part may be about fifty or sixty feet above the level of the plain, and it has been dug into for the purpose of procuring bricks. Just below the highest part of it, is a small dome in an oblong inclosure, which it is pretended contains the body of a son of Ali, named Amran, together with those of seven of his companions, all slain at the battle of Hellah. Unfortunately for the credit of the tradition, however, it is proved on better authority to be a fraud, not uncommon in these parts, Ali having had no son of this description. From the most remarkable object on it I shall distinguish this mound by the name of Amran.

On the north is a valley of five hundred and fifty yards in length, the area of which is covered with tussocks of rank grass, and crossed by a line of ruins of very little elevation. To this succeeds the second grand heap of ruins, the shape of which is nearly a square, of seven hundred yards length and breadth, and its southwest angle is connected with the northwest angle of the mounds of Amran, by a ridge of considerable height and nearly one hundred yards in breadth. This is the place where Beauchamp made his observations, and it is certainly the most interesting part of the ruins of Babylon: every vestige discoverable in it, declares it to have been composed of buildings far superiour to all the rest which have left traces in the eastern quarter: the bricks are of the finest description; and notwithstanding this is the grand storehouse of them, and that the greatest supplies have been and are now constantly drawn from it, they appear still to be abundant. But the operation of extracting the bricks has caused great confusion, and contributed much to increase the difficulty of decyphering the original design of this mound, as in search of them the workmen pierce into it in every direction, hollowing out deep ravines and pits, and throwing up the rubbish in heaps on the surface. In some instances they have bored into the solid mass, forming winding caverns and subterranean passages, which, from their being left without adequate support, frequently bury the workmen in rubbish. In all these excavations, walls of burnt brick laid in lime mortar of a very good quality are seen; and in addition to the substances generally strewed on the surfaces of all these mounds, we here find fragments of alabaster vessels, fine earthen ware, marble,

and great quantities of varnished tile, the glazing and colouring of which are surprisingly fresh. In a hollow near the southern part, I found a sepulchral urn of earthen ware, which had been broken in digging, and near it lay some human bones which pulverized with the touch.

To be more particular in my description of this mound, not more than two hundred yards from its northern extremity is a ravine, hollowed out by those who dig for bricks, in length near a hundred yards, and thirty feet wide by forty or fifty deep. On one side of it a few yards of wall remain standing, the face of which is very clean and perfect, and it appears to have been the front of some building. The opposite side is so confused a mass of rubbish, that it should seem the ravine had been worked through a solid building. Under the foundations at the southern end an opening is made, which discovers a subterranean passage, floored and walled with large bricks laid in bitumen, and covered over with pieces of sandstone, a yard thick and several yards long, on which the whole being so great as to have given a considerable degree of obliquity to the side walls of the passage. It is half full of blackish water (probably rainwater impregnated with nitre, in filtering through the ruins which are very productive of it) and the workmen say that some way on it is high enough for a horseman to pass upright; as much as I saw of it, it was near seven feet in height, and its course to the south.

A little to the west of the ravine is the next remarkable object, called by the natives the Kasr, or Palace, by which appellation I shall designate the whole mass. It is a very remarkable ruin, which being uncovered and in part detached from the rubbish, is visible from a considerable distance, but so surprisingly fresh in its appearance, that it was only after a minute inspection, I was satisfied of its being in reality a Babylonian remain. It consists of several walls and piers (which face the cardinal points) eight feet in thickness, in some places ornamented with niches, and in others strengthened by pilasters and buttresses, built of fine burnt brick, (still perfectly clean and sharp,) laid in lime cement of such tenacity, that those whose business it is, have given up working it, on account of the extreme difficulty of extracting them whole. The tops of these walls are broken, and may have been much higher. On the outside they have been cleared in some places nearly to the

foundations, but the internal spaces occupied by them are yet filled with rubbish in some parts almost to their summit. One part of the wall has been split into three parts and overthrown as if by an earthquake; some detached walls of the same kind, standing at different distances, show what remains, to have been only a small part of the original fabric; indeed, it appears that the passage in the ravine, together with the wall which crosses its upper end, were connected with it. There are some hollows underneath, in which several persons have lost their lives; so that no one will venture into them, and their entrances have now become choked with rubbish. Near this ruin is a heap of rubbish, the sides of which are curiously streaked by the alternation of its materials, the chief part of which, it is probable, was unburnt brick, of which I found a small quantity in the neighbourhood, but no reeds were discoverable in the interstices. There are two paths made near this ruin by the workmen who carry down their bricks to the river side, whence they are transported by boats to Hellah: and a little to the northeast of it is the famous tree which the natives call *Athebê*, and maintain to have been flourishing in ancient Babylon, from the destruction of which they say, God purposely preserved it that it might afford Ali a convenient place to tie up his horse after the battle of Hellah! It stands on a kind of ridge, and nothing more than one side of its trunk remains (by which it appears to have been of considerable girth;) yet the branches at the top are perfectly verdant, and gently waving in the wind produce a melancholy rustling sound. It is an evergreen something resembling the *lignumvitæ*, and of a kind I believe not common in this part of the country, though I am told there is a tree of the same description at Bassora.

All the people of the country assert, that it is extremely dangerous to approach this mound after nightfall, on account of the multitude of evil spirits by which it is haunted.

A mile to the north of the Kasr, or full five miles distant from Hellah, and nine hundred and fifty yards from the river-bank, is the last ruin of this series, which has been described by Pietro Della Valle, who determines it to have been the tower of Belus, an opinion adopted by Rennel. The natives call it Mukalibê, (or according to the vulgar Arab pronunciation of these parts, Mujelibê,) meaning *overturned*; they sometimes also apply this term to the

mounds of the Kasr. It is of an oblong shape, irregular in its height and the measurement of its sides, which face the cardinal points; the northern side being two hundred yards in length, the southern two hundred and nineteen, the eastern one hundred and eighty-two, and the western one hundred and thirty-six: the elevation of the east or highest angle, one hundred and forty-one feet. The western face, which is the least elevated, is the most interesting on account of the appearance of building it presents. Near the summit of it appears a low wall, with interruptions, built of unburnt bricks, mixed up with chopped straw or reeds, and cemented with clay mortar of great thickness, having between every layer a layer of reeds; and on the north side are also some vestiges of a similar construction. The south west angle is crowned by something like a turret or lantern: the other angles are in a less perfect state, but may originally have been ornamented in the same manner. The western face is lowest and easiest of ascent, the northern the most difficult. All are worn into furrows by the weather; and in some places where several channels of rain have united together, these furrows are of great depth, penetrate a considerable way into the mound. The summit is covered with heaps of rubbish, in digging into some of which, layers of broken burnt brick cemented with mortar are discovered, and whole bricks with inscriptions on them are here and there found: the whole is covered with innumerable fragments of pottery, brick, bitumen, pebbles, vitrified brick or scoria, and even shells, bits of glass, and mother of pearl. On asking a Turk how he imagined these latter substances were brought there, he replied without the least hesitation, 'By the Deluge.' There are many dens of wild beasts in various parts, in one of which I found the bones of sheep and other animals, and perceived a strong smell like that of a lion. I also found quantities of porcupine's quills, and in most of the cavities are numbers of bats and owls. Here I first heard the oriental account of satyrs. I had always imagined the belief of their existence was confined to the mythology of the west: but a Choadar, who was with me when I examined this ruin, mentioned by accident, that in this desert an animal is found, resembling a man from the head to the waist, but having the thighs and legs of a sheep or goat; he said also that the Arabs hunt it with dogs, and eat the lower parts, abstaining from the upper,

on account of their resemblance to those of the human species. "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures: and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." Isaiah xiii. 21. I with difficulty refrain from transcribing the whole of this most spirited chapter. The Hebrew word, which we translate *satyrs*, is שְׂעִירִים, literally "the hairy ones," a signification which has been preserved in the vulgate. In Lev. xvii. 9. the word is used for "devils, evil spirits." The present Jews understand it in this place as synonymous with שְׂדִים, or demons. I know not why we introduced the word *satyrs*,—probably on the authority of Aben Ezra, or some other commentator; but we should have been cautious how we made the prophet accountable in a manner for a fabulous being. Since the above was written, I find that the belief of the existence of satyrs is by no means rare in this country. The Arabs call them Sied Assad, and say that they abound in some woody places near Semara, on the Euphrates.

But although there are no ruins in the immediate vicinity of the river, by far the most stupendous and surprising mass of all the remains of Babylon, is situated in this desert, about six miles to the south-west of Hellah. It is called by the Arabs *Birs Nemroud*, by the Jews Nebuchadnezzar's prison, and has been described both by Pere Emanuel, and Niebuhr (who was prevented from inspecting it closely by fear of the Arabs,) but I believe it has not been noticed by any other traveller.

The *Birs Nemroud* is a mound of an oblong figure, the total circumference of which is seven hundred and sixty two yards. At the eastern side it is cloven by a deep furrow, and is not more than fifty or sixty feet high; but at the western it rises in a conical figure to the elevation of one hundred and ninety-eight feet, and on its summit is a solid pile of brick, thirty-seven feet high by twenty-eight in breadth, diminishing in thickness to the top, which is broken and irregular, and rent by a large fissure extending through a third of its height. It is perforated in small square holes disposed in rhomboids. The fine burnt bricks of which it is built, have inscriptions on them; and so admirable is the cement, which appears to be lime mortar, that though the layers are so close together that it is difficult to discern what substance is between them, it is nearly impossible to

extract one of the bricks whole. The other parts of the summit of this hill are occupied by immense fragments of brick work of no determinate figure, tumbled together, and converted into solid vitrified masses, as if they had undergone the action of the fiercest fire, or been blown up with gunpowder, the layers of the bricks being perfectly discernible—a curious fact, and one for which I am incapable of accounting. These, incredible as it may seem, are actually the ruins spoken of by Pere Emanuel, who takes no sort of notice of the prodigious mound on which they are elevated.

It is almost needless to observe, that the whole of this mound is itself a ruin, channelled by the weather, and strewn with the usual fragments, and with pieces of blackstone, sandstone, and marble. In the eastern parts, layers of unburnt bricks are plainly to be seen, but no reeds were discernible in any part: possibly the absence of them here, when they are so generally seen under similar circumstances, may be an argument of the superiour antiquity of the ruin. In the north side may be seen traces of building exactly similar to the brick pile. At the foot of the mound a step may be traced, scarcely elevated above the plain, exceeding in extent, by several feet each way, the true or measured base; and there is a quadrangular inclosure round the whole, as at the Mujelibè, but much more perfect, and of greater dimensions. At a trifling distance from the Birs, and parallel with its eastern face, is a mound not inferior to the Kasr in elevation, but much longer than it is broad. On the top of it are two Koubbes or oratories, one called Makam Ibrahim Khalil, and said to be the place where Ibrahim was thrown into the fire by order of Nemroud, who surveyed the scene from the Birs; the other which is in ruins, Makam Sakel Zeman; but to what part of Mehdy's life it relates, I am ignorant. In the oratories I searched in vain for the inscriptions mentioned by Niebuhr: near that of Ibrahim Khalil is a small excavation into the mound, which merits no attention; but the mound itself is curious from its position, and correspondence with others, as I shall in the sequel have occasion to remark.

Round the Birs are traces of ruins to a considerable extent. To the north is the canal which supplies Mesjid Ali with water, which was dug at the expense of the Nuwaub Shujahed Doulah, and called after his country Hindia. We

were informed that from the summit of the Birs, in a clear morning, the gilt dome of Mesjid Ali may be seen.

The most extraordinary building within the city, was the tower, pyramid, or sepulchre of Belus, the base of which, Strabo says, was a square of a stadium each side, and it was a stadium in height. It has been generally considered that Herodotus has given an extravagant account of its dimensions. He says that the first platform, or largest and lowest of the eight towers of which it was composed, was *σταδίου καὶ τοῦ μίκρος καὶ τοῦ εὐρος*, which has been rendered "a stadium in height and breadth; which, supposing the seven other towers to have borne some proportion to it, may be clearly pronounced an absurdity: but *μικρος* also signifies length, space, and prolixity; in this signification it combines better with *εὐρος*, as length and breadth is a more usual phrase than height and breadth, and the passage then would mean no more than that the base was the square of a stadium.

An additional interest attaches itself to the sepulchre of Belus, from the probability of its identity with the tower which the descendants of Noah, with Belus at their head, constructed in the plain of Shinaar, the completion of which was prevented in so remarkable a manner. I am strongly inclined to differ with the sense in which Genesis ii. 4. is commonly understood. I think too much importance has been attached to the words "*may reach unto Heaven*," which are not in the original, whose words are *דראשר בשמים*, "*and its top to the skies*," by a metaphor common to all ages and languages, i. e. with a very elevated and conspicuous summit. This is certainly a more rational interpretation, than supposing a people in their senses, even at that early period, would undertake to scale heaven by means of a building of their own construction.

A careful examiner will find as great a difficulty in discovering the tower of Belus, as in identifying any other part of the ruins. Taking for granted the site of Babylon to be in the vicinity of Hellah, his choice will be divided between two objects, the Mujelibè and the Birs Nemroud. I shall briefly notice the arguments in favour of each, with the difficulties and objections that may be advanced, first giving a comparative statement of their dimensions with those of the original tower.

	English Feet.
Total circumference, or sum of the four sides of the Birs,	2286
Ditto of the Mujelibè,	2211
Ditto of the tower of Belus, taking 500 feet for the stadium,	2000

By this it appears that the measurement both of the Birs and the Mujelibè agrees as nearly as possible with that of the tower of Belus, considering our ignorance of the exact proportion of the stadium, and the enlargement which the base must have undergone by the crumbling of the materials. The variations in the form of the Mujelibè from a perfect square, are not more than the accidents of time will account for ; and the reader will best judge from my description, whether the summit and external appearance of this ruin corresponds in any way with the accounts of the tower.

The only building which can dispute the palm with the Mujelibè is the Birs Nemroud, previous to visiting which I had not the slightest idea of the possibility of its being the tower of Belus ; indeed its situation was a strong argument against such a supposition ; but the moment I had examined it I could not help exclaiming, “ Had this been on the other side of the river, and nearer the great mass of ruins, no one could doubt of its being the remains of the tower.”

Instead of being disappointed at the difficulty of ascertaining any part of the original plan of Babylon, from its present remains, we ought rather to be astonished at the grandeur of that city, which has left such traces, when we consider that it was nearly a heap of ruins two thousand years ago ; that immense cities have been built out of its materials, which still appear to be inexhaustible ; and that the capital of the Abassides, which we know to have been one of the most extensive and magnificent cities of comparatively modern times, has left but a few confused vestiges which are scarcely elevated above the level of the desert, and which in a few years the most enquiring eye will be unable to discover.